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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D. C. 20505

19 June 1979

ALERT MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM FOR: The National Security Council

SUBJECT : Basque Problem Threatening Dangerous Turn

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The negotiations on Basque autonomy are having heavy going, and Prime Minister Suarez is under growing pressure to resort to strong measures to curb the rising violence. I think you should be aware of my concern that should he go too far in this direction, a nonviolent settlement of this already disruptive issue could become impossible. The fall-out would put a serious strain on Spain's new institutions.

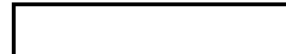


  
STANSFIELD TURNER

Attachment



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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

19 June 1979

ALERT MEMORANDUM\*

Basque Problem Threatening Dangerous Turn ☐

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*The Government of Spain may be reaching a time of critical decision regarding Basque autonomy. The Basques are increasingly and dangerously impatient, and Prime Minister Suarez will soon find it almost impossible to temporize. Although parliamentary consideration of the autonomy statute is under way, there are signs that the government may be moving away from a policy of conciliation because of a strong conviction--represented with particular strength among the Spanish military--that the concessions demanded by the Basques would undermine the integrity of the Spanish state. If the government adopts a policy of repression, Spain's democratic institutions will be strained, sympathies of other European countries may be alienated, and US interests will be affected.* ☐

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In the region itself, the level of violence and tension has markedly risen and the cycle of terrorist incidents is on the upswing again. Indications are that negotiations between the government and the moderate Basque Nationalist Party on the regional autonomy statute that might alleviate the situation are going badly, and that time is running out. Gains made by Basque radicals in the March and April elections make it virtually impossible for the moderates to accept less than far-reaching autonomy. Suarez might still salvage the situation by making major concessions, but government capitulation to Basque demands would be highly unpopular with national-minded Spaniards and anathema to the military. If the negotiations falter, there would be a real prospect of increased Basque violence, strong government repression, and an extension of Basque terrorism to new areas. The point of no return has not yet been reached, but Suarez seems more and more preoccupied with maintaining order, increasingly frustrated with the negotiations, and more inclined to opt for "quasi-military" measures. ☐

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*\*The Alert Memorandum is an interagency publication issued by the Director of Central Intelligence on behalf of the Intelligence Community. Its purpose is to ensure that senior policymakers are aware of the serious implications for US interests of impending potential developments. It is not a prediction that these developments will occur. This memorandum has been coordinated at the working level by CIA, DIA, NSA, and State/INR.*

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25X1 We believe that such measures would not initially include use of army troops, but would concentrate on reinforcing national police forces and using to the fullest extent the provisions of the anti-terrorist act passed by parliament. The terrorists would seize every opportunity to provoke confrontations that would polarize the population, and the repressive measures required would put a severe strain on Spain's fragile new institutions. Under these circumstances prospects for a negotiated settlement would be slim indeed. [ ]

25X1 There is disagreement within the intelligence community about whether the government would send in troops to back up the security forces, but there is general consensus that if troops do move in, the likely reaction in the Basque region would quickly precipitate a full-scale military presence. [ ]

Should the Spanish Government resort to army troops to suppress the violence, the following consequences seem likely:

- It would be generally perceived in Western Europe as a setback to the consolidation of democracy in Spain.
- In some European countries it would revive hostility to Spain's accession to the EC and eventual membership in NATO.
- Spain would come under increasing criticism in influential American circles, possibly complicating renegotiation of the bilateral treaty in 1981.
- Because of alleged Basque ties to US forces during World War II and the sizeable US Basque population (concentrated in Idaho and Nevada) attempts could be made by either the regional parties or the Madrid government to draw Washington into a mediating role. [ ]

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INR Dissent

25X1 INR believes that this Alert Memorandum is based on an overdramatic interpretation of events and presents a worst-case scenario that is not presently justifiable. Although the Basque problem is the single most taxing issue the Suarez government faces, the military authorities have shown themselves willing and able to absorb terrorist provocations at a high level. The government recognizes clearly the danger overreaction would pose to the evolution of Spanish democracy; it is now beginning to give its full attention to pending legislation on regional autonomy. Both sides will play many options before resorting to all-out violence and repression. INR reemphasizes that the point of no return has not yet been reached. [ ]

25X1 The immediate course of events is likely to be clarified by June 25, when the period for submitting to the government formal comments on the proposed autonomy statutes ends. [ ]

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25X1 [ ] INR believes  
25X1 that only after this point can a soundly based appreciation of the nature of the issue be formulated. [ ]

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